



PROBLEMS OF ACCESSING PROFESSIONAL EDUCATION AMONG HIGHER SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS OF PUDUCHERRY

Sreekala. E¹ | John Paul. A²

¹ Assistant Professor, School of Education, Pondicherry University.

² Junior Research Fellow (UGC-JRF), School of Education, Pondicherry University.

Introduction

This study intends to understand the problems of higher secondary school students in accessing professional education. In the present study, professional education courses refer to the programmes of medicine, engineering and law. Socio-economic status of students play important role in accessing quality education. Based on the resources a student receives in his life, the quality of his life is decided. Moreover, students' interest, motivation and endowed with aspiration also play a vital role in building the educational career. In Puducherry, professional education courses accessed by students is based on the marks secured in twelfth standard. Conducting entrance examinations for selection of students is not a practice in Puducherry. Students from Puducherry can also write entrance examinations for professional courses run by central government. Everybody cannot access whatever course they want after completing their higher secondary education. Especially professional courses like medicine and engineering are high in demand in terms of marks gained in public examinations and subject knowledge.

A Literature Review

Chanana, K (1993) conducted a study on accessing higher education and found that the preferential treatment for the benefit of scheduled castes, scheduled tribes, minorities and women have not reached them properly. Educational administration and educational policies failed to integrate people from different strata of society and there exist a gap between policy and practice.

Nazaki, Y (2009) conducted a study on international perspectives on education and society. Women's access to higher education is one of the most drastic increase that resulted in significant world-wide transformations in education. In most of the developed nations the gender gap is narrowing because of women participation in higher education and employment. At international level, education of men and women in enrollment and academic excellence is almost equal

Kaul, R (2001) conducted a study on accessing primary education and explained the caste dynamics in Indian scenario. In addition to stratification based on class, caste based stratification persists in Indian social fabric resulting mismatched educational opportunities in India. Village studies showed that formation of groups on the basis of caste, religious and other composition than on the basis of economics and politics.

Tilak (1994) analyzed the growth, development and investment in education during 1984-94. The contribution of education to development was meaningful and the power of education was proved. He suggested research with education will foster development further.

Blaug, M (1969) conducted a study on education and employment and explained the sluggishness in the reaction speed in the market for educated persons. It was concluded that the persistence of educated unemployment in India may be explained by the resistance of educated people hesitate to take irrelevant jobs.

George (1985) explained the issues in selecting appropriate method for educational investment. He suggested that educational investments should be coordinated with other investment and it would bring better results in human resources. Varghese (1996) examined the crucial phenomenon of continued expansion of enrolments in higher education even when employment opportunities for university graduates were declining. It was argued that unemployment was due to the qualification escalation process taking place in the labor market.

Panchmuki (1965) calculated the cost of education in India for the period of 1950-51 to 1959-60. According to him the cost of education constituted 6.2% of GNP in 1959-60.

Ramchandran (1987) examine the problems of higher education in India with special reference to Kerala. The study revealed an ever growing expansion of enrolment, institution and expenditure over the period. The total expenditure was increasing steadily but the fee receipt was very low. He pointed out that the salary

constituted the largest component in the total cost of education.

Salim (1997) in his book "the cost of higher education in India" analyzed the structural growth of higher education since independence. According to him, the burden on government is heavy since the receipts from the higher education sector remained low. He emphasized the need systematic changes in the policy of subsidies and pricing of higher education after a careful analysis of socio-economic status of the students.

Objectives

To study the problems of higher secondary school students in accessing professional education with respect to following aspects:

- Home related aspects
- School related aspects.

To study the problems of higher secondary school students in accessing professional education with respect to the following,

- Type of school
- Locality
- Caste
- Religion.

Methodology

Survey method was employed to collect data from higher secondary school students. The researcher developed a tool to assess the problems in accessing professional education. Validity of the tool was established by getting consent from the subject experts. Reliability of the tool was found to be 0.760 using cron-bach alpha method.

Sampling

In Puducherry, there are hundred and seven higher secondary schools. From those schools ten schools were selected by simple random method. Using simple random method 430 students were sampled out.

Testing of Hypothesis

Hypothesis-1

There is no significant difference in the scores of home related aspects of problems of accessing professional education with respect to the type of school.

Table 1.1:t-test: School related aspects with respect to type of school.

School	N	Mean	SD	SE	df	't'	Sig
Private	190	14.59	2.630	0.257	248	4.823	0.000
Government	240	12.99	2.571	0.214			

Since the table value for significance is 0.000 which is lesser than 0.05, the null hypothesis is rejected. So there exists a significant difference in the mean scores of home related aspects of problems in accessing professional education with respect to the type of school. It is inferred that the home aspects of private school students are more conducive and permitting with respect to accessing professional education.

Hypothesis-2

There is no significant difference in the scores of school related aspects of problems in accessing professional education with respect to the type of school.

Table 1.2:t-test: School related aspects with respect to type of school.

School	N	Mean	SD	SE	df	't'	Sig
Private	190	9.59	3.697	0.361	248	4.454	0.000
Government	240	7.84	2.510	0.208			

Since the table value for significance is 0.000 which is lesser than 0.05, the null hypothesis is rejected. So there exists a significant difference in the mean scores

of school related aspects in accessing professional education with respect to the type of school.

Hypothesis-3

There is no significant difference in the scores of problems in accessing professional education among higher secondary students with respect to the type of school.

Table 1.4: t-test: problems in accessing Professional education with respect to school.

School	N	Mean	SD	SE	Df	't'	Sig
Private	190	24.18	5.682	0.554	248	5.414	0.000
Government	240	20.83	4.114	0.342			

Since the table value for significance is 0.000 which is lesser than 0.05, the null hypothesis is rejected. So there exists a significant difference in scores of accessing professional education between private and government higher secondary students. It is inferred that private school students are at the receiving end of more favourable opportunities to access professional education than government school students.

Hypothesis-4

There is no significant difference in the scores of problems in accessing professional education among higher secondary students with respect to religion.

Table 1.5: ANOVA: problems in accessing Professional education with respect to religion.

Religion	N	Mean	SE	SD	df	'F'	Sig
Hindu	310	22.00	0.355	5.091	247	3.215	0.042
Christian	80	26.00	1.348	4.264			
Muslim	40	22.00	0.864	5.038			

Since the table value for significance is 0.042 is lesser than 0.05, the null hypothesis is rejected. So there exists significant difference in the scores of higher secondary students with respect to religion. The mean score of Christian students is higher than Hindus and Muslims, the chances for Christians to accessing professional courses is high.

Hypothesis-5

There is no significant difference in the scores of problems in accessing professional education among higher secondary students with respect to caste.

Table 1.6: ANOVA: problems in accessing Professional education with respect to caste.

Caste	N	Mean	SD	SE	df	'F'	Sig
1. Scheduled Caste	280	22.00	4.337	0.703	247	7.092	0.001
Scheduled Tribe							
2. Other Backward Class							
3. General	110	25.00	6.502	1.149			

Since the table value for significance is 0.001 which is lesser than 0.05, the null hypothesis is rejected. So there exists significant difference in the scores of higher secondary students with respect to caste. The mean score of general category students is higher than students from other backward class and Scheduled Caste and Scheduled tribe.

Hypothesis-6

There is no significant difference in the scores of problems in accessing professional education among higher secondary students with respect to father's education.

Table 1.7: ANOVA: problems in accessing Professional education with respect to father's education.

Father Education	N	Mean	SD	SE	df	F	Sig
Illiterate	32	21	4.779	0.832	4	19.090	0.000
School	328	21	4.503	0.347			
Under Graduate	37	27	4.302	0.710			
Post Graduate	33	27	2.928	1.107			
Above Post Graduate	20	29	4.970	2.223			

Since the table value for significance is 0.000 which is lesser than 0.05, the null hypothesis is rejected. So there exists significant difference in the scores of problems in accessing professional education among higher secondary students with respect to fathers' education.

There is no significant difference in the scores of problems in accessing profes-

sional education among higher secondary students with respect to educational interest.

Table 1.8: ANOVA: Problems in accessing Professional education with respect to educational interest.

Interest	N	Mean	SD	SE	df	'F'	Sig
Medicine	180	20.22	4.237	0.697	4	6.347	0.000
Engineering	160	20.83	5.076	2.072			
Law	30	21.48	4.882	0.483			
Arts, Science	70	23.76	5.217	0.509			

Since the table value for significance 0.000 which is lesser than 0.05, the null hypothesis is rejected. So there exists significant difference in the scores of problems in accessing professional education with respect to educational preference. From the table it is clear that 105 students prefer to study medicine, 102 students prefer to study engineering. So medicine and engineering are the most preferred courses by the higher secondary students.

Hypothesis-7

There is no significant difference in the scores of problems in accessing professional education among higher secondary students with respect to family income.

Table 1.9: ANOVA: Problems in accessing Professional education with respect to family income.

Family Income(Rs.)	N	Mean	SD	SE	df	'F'	Sig
0-10,000	242	20.75	4.311	0.362	4	13.678	0.000
11-30,000	118	22.81	5.345	0.643			
31-50,000	40	25.22	3.934	0.927			
51-100,000	27	27.08	4.780	1.328			
Above One Lakh	13	29.13	5.276	1.865			

Since the table value for significance 0.000 which is lesser than 0.05, the null hypothesis is rejected. So there exists a significant difference in the scores of problems in accessing professional education among higher secondary students with respect to family income. From the above table, it is clear that there a chance of increase in the scores of access to professional education when there is an increase in family income. For a family if income is high, the chance of accessing the desired professional course is also high.

Hypothesis-8

There is no significant difference in the scores of problems in accessing professional education among higher secondary students with respect to medium of instruction.

Table 2.0: t-test: Problems in accessing Professional education with respect to medium of instruction.

Medium	N	Mean	SD	SE	df	't'	Sig
English	280	22.33	5.344	0.362	248	-0.017	0.987
Tamil	150	22.25	3.016	0.533			

Since the table value for significance 0.987 which is greater than 0.05, the null hypothesis is accepted. So there is no significant difference in the scores of problems in accessing professional education among higher secondary students with respect to medium of instruction. It may be inferred that medium of instruction is not a barrier to accessing professional education.

Hypothesis-9

There is no significant difference in the scores of problems in accessing professional education among higher secondary students with respect to locality.

Table 2.1: t-test: Problems in accessing Professional education with respect to Locality.

Locality	N	Mean	SD	SE	df	't'	Sig
Rural	42	20.38	3.342	0.516	248	-2.614	0.009
Urban	388	22.61	5.315	0.369			

Since the table value for significance is 0.009 which is lesser than 0.05, the null hypothesis is rejected. So there exists significant difference in the scores of problems in accessing professional education among higher secondary students with respect to locality. Urban atmosphere is more conducive for tuition and coaching classes than rural atmosphere.

Hypothesis-10

There is no significant difference in the scores of problems in accessing profes-

sional education among higher secondary students with respect to academic achievement.

Table 2.2: ANOVA: Problems in accessing Professional education with respect to academic achievement.

Academic	N	Mean	SD	SE	df	'F'	Sig
Failure	40	22.14	5.348	1.140	4	5.146	0.001
1 st Class	204	22.16	5.273	0.517			
2 nd Class	116	21.77	4.114	0.531			
3 rd Class	4	20.29	4.726	0.811			
Distinction	24	25.70	5.174	0.945			

Since the table value for significance is 0.001 which is lesser than 0.05, the null hypothesis is rejected. So there exists significant difference in the scores of problems in accessing professional education among higher secondary students with respect to academic achievement.

Hypothesis-11

There is no significant difference in the scores of problems in accessing professional education among higher secondary students with respect to father's occupation.

Table 2.3: ANOVA: Problems in accessing Professional education with respect to father's occupation.

Father Occupation	N	Mean	SD	SE	df	'F'	Sig
Nil	33	21.64	4.218	0.797	8	5.540	0.000
Coolie	107	20.86	3.958	0.470			
Security	14	19.00	4.561	1.862			
Skill work	135	21.58	5.018	0.544			
Manager	31	24.56	5.570	1.857			
Teacher	19	27.40	6.066	2.713			
Professional	28	27.05	4.949	1.135			
Business	62	23.80	5.874	1.175			
Administrator	10	28.50	3.536	2.500			

Since the table value for significance is 0.000 which is lesser than 0.05, the null hypothesis is rejected. So there exists significant difference in the scores of problems in accessing professional education among higher secondary students with respect to father's occupation. Parental occupation is a very important aspect in children's educational progress. The mean scores of students whose parents are teachers, doctors, engineers, professors are relatively higher when compared to the scores of students whose parents holding less prestigious jobs.

Findings and Recommendations

Statistical tests were employed to find the mean differences among different groups. Government school students scored less in their chances of accessing professional education when compared to private school students. There is a significant difference with respect to rural and urban division of locality. So in the present study, the scores of problems in accessing professional education is being influenced by socio-economic status of higher secondary school students. The results of the present study is similar to the study conducted by Bowman (1991). He stated that opportunities and capacities to pursue professional education courses is broadly related to socio-economic background, school and community related factors (Bowman, 1981).

The mean scores of problems in accessing professional education of students from rural background is significantly lesser than students from urban background. Students from urban background have facilities in accessing professional education in terms of geography. Locality where the students are being brought up plays significant role in accessing professional education. So the result of the present study is in accordance with the study conducted by Murnae (1981) and he stated that familial, community and geographical characteristics play an important role in the formation of expectations related to education and employment. Socio-economic status, attitude and behavior are important determinants of students' intellectual development and their expectations.

Higher secondary school students from rural background have lesser opportunities in accessing professional education courses. Infrastructure facility, proper coaching, up to date subject knowledge are not provided to rural students. So naturally rural students are not able to compete with urban students. Hence the government should take this issue for policy decision. The government should take steps to equalize the opportunities between rural and urban higher secondary school students. Government should concentrate on the areas where students from rural areas are lagging behind students from urban areas. Geographic location can be important determinant of opportunities and capacity to act on them.

People from poor areas lack in financial, material resources and also access to communal networks of mutual assistance. It leads to missing opportunities. So it may drastically affect their expectations due to self-imposed constraints in their attitude and behavior (Lourry, 1998).

Caste wise scores of problems in accessing professional education also differed significantly. Only by medium of instruction there was no difference in the scores of problems in accessing professional education. On the whole, type of school, religion, locality, caste, family income, fathers' occupation, fathers' education influence the chances of accessing professional education. Only medium of instruction had no influence on chances of accessing professional education.

Government and private higher secondary school students differ significantly in the scores of accessing professional education courses. So the government of Puducherry may look into this issue and analyze the causes for such differences between private and government higher secondary students in accessing professional education courses. Government should take adequate measures to rule out the differences between government and private higher secondary schools.

It is generally accepted that higher education paves way to access route for aspiring individuals to attain social and economic freedom in India. The policies in education and employment followed over years created an incentive structure and employment in the modern sector (Forest, 2007).

Ninety percent of private school students are aware of the procedures of applying for professional courses offered by state government as well as central government. But nearly fifty percent government school students are not aware of the procedures of applying for professional courses. The study was conducted in Puducherry region only. This issue is very crucial in deciding the future of higher secondary school students. Government has to conduct awareness programmes for government higher secondary school students to understand the different ways of accessing professional education courses.

Higher socio-economic status is positively related to the academic achievement in the present study. The status of parental job and income of higher secondary school students influenced positively in the scores of problems in accessing professional education.

Research from the west has pointed out that social-cognitive variables in the form of cognitions about self and the world of work combine with socio-economic status to influence career decision making process (Wilgosh, 1993). As per the results of this study, the social atmosphere in private schools is more favourable in terms of accessing professional education when compared to government schools. Encouragement and motivation gained private schools would boost up the students in accessing professional education.

Private schooling, private tuition and coaching classes play significant role in terms of opportunities in accessing professional education. Previous studies in Puducherry showed that when medicine is taken into consideration mostly private school students catch more seats than government school students. Government has to improve the quality of education in government higher secondary schools rapidly and then only equalization of opportunities in accessing professional education would occur. Improving the standards in education would improve the outcomes in education.

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